

#### June Newsletter Vol 8 Issue No. 6 2023

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Sr Louise Roche

Dear Partners, Supporters, Family and Friends,

On the 22nd of June, Sr Louise Roche left us to return to Cork, Ireland. I am very grateful for the amazing work she did in drainage, repairs, maintenance, provision of furniture and recycling of donated furniture and equipment. I am grateful to the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province, who generously gave her to work with and for us, even though they could have utilized her in Cork. We hope that they can give a replacement, as she has left a huge gap. We miss her not only for her work but her support, her presence in the community, her company, and her devotion to her religious life and prayer. We wish Louise every peace and happiness as she begins again in Cork.

We see a lot of hunger these days in Mukuru informal settlements. It is very upsetting. We pray that the economy improves so that these Mukuru residents can again earn their living. It is humiliating for former workers to have to beg to survive. There are no unemployment benefits here. If a person is not working, they have no income. The social services are stretched and we see increasing deaths of children which are hunger related. We are grateful for the services of our clinic at this time of hardship. Thanks to the Irish and Spanish volunteers who assisted in the clinic. The patients and students spoke highly of them.



The boys in the rehabilitation centre continue with their education, art, music, sports and job training. It is very heartening to see the transformation from how they were when they were admitted and how they are after some time. Thanks to all of you who partner with us in this work of transformation.

As prices rise and economic conditions for parents worsen, they have less money for food and the danger of children, especially those who are not bright or who have disabilities, suffering from malnutrition rises. In Songa Mbele, the staff do their best to feed the children well during the week. We are grateful to our supporters, local donors and partners including Cheshire Disability Services for enabling us to continue this great work which is so important for the children.

The primary schools all need more support for the implementation of the new Curriculum Based syllabus than we or the Government have been able to give them. We will continue to help as much as we can. All schools are affected by increasing poverty and absenteeism as children assist in working or begging to help the family to eat.

St Michael's Secondary School struggle to have quality education in the midst of the poverty and challenges of life in Mukuru. The cost of inter-school competitions rose to unaffordable amounts and a lot of it is caused by inflation by unscrupulous teachers and officials demanding payment for services from each student, which most of ours cannot afford. Up till a few years ago, teachers donated services of judging music and refereeing games. This is no longer the case. Children from poorer areas especially slums, are blocked from participation. The selling of drugs to school children is increasing as vendors seek to earn their living by any means. They can sell drug-coated sweets and icy pops so as to make the children addicted and they run from school to buy such things. Dealing with addicts in secondary school especially is a daily occurrence. Parents and teachers need to work together on this challenge. We are grateful to those donating books and various other items to students to help them stay at school and do well.

Training for jobs and self-employment is crucial amid high unemployment. Our vocational centre trains over 200 youth daily, with most securing jobs that improve their families lives. We express our gratitude to all supporters of our centre.

Thank you for your contributions that empower Mukuru slum residents, including children, students, youths, and seniors suffering in the harsh economic climate.

Best wishes Sr Mary *Director* 



# Sr Louise Roche

After ministering in Kenya for 35 years Sr Louise Roche decided to return to Ireland. The last of those 35 years was spent assisting with various repairs and maintenance projects at MPC. This quiet unassuming Sister

of Mercy was a woman of many talents with a passion for the poor and sometimes referred to as Sr Reno for meticulous renovations. Sr Louise, like many sisters, has the 'formal' retirement step that society dictates when it should happen however, often decades after the 'formal age' has been reached, the Sisters continue to do significant work in different positions in a myriad of disciplines. Sr Louise worked tirelessly at the young age of 82 with all MPC departments, especially following up on the maintenance program at Songa Mbele na Masomo Centre, Rehabilitation Centre and St Michael's Secondary School.

MPC will greatly lament Sr Louise for everything she was able to do with such grace, rigour and determination. We wish Sr Louise God's choicest blessings for her next 'retirement' position in Cork, Ireland.





Office Farewell



Self-portrait presented by Songa staff
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Outside the renovated classroom at Songa Mbele



Repairs at St Michael's



Songa Mbele Staff Farewell Mukuru Promotion Centre June Newsletter 2023



Social Services

At the beginning of the month, the Department was bustling with various activities. The social workers were busy with tasks such as supporting and monitoring new business startups, conducting home visits, and writing family profiles. Their dedication to promptly meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in our care has been unwavering.

Many people are struggling to afford basic necessities due to the increasing cost of living. However, the Department has been able to assist needy families in Mukuru slums with food distribution through St Catherine's Social Office. Additionally, the Amaranth program provides nutritional aid every two weeks to sick clients with chronic illnesses. The school social offices have also distributed sanitary towels to girls from vulnerable families to reduce absenteeism and enable them to attend classes regularly.

During the month, our department provided assistance to the victims of a fire incident that took place in the Mukuru kwa Njenga and Mukuru kwa Reuben slums. This unfortunate event affected families and students from our schools, causing them to lose their school uniforms and books. We are thankful for the generous donations we received during this time, which allowed us to provide aid to the victims and other needy families residing in the Mukuru slums.





Fire incident that burnt 3 households in Mukuru Kwa Rueben and Mukuru Kwa Njenga affected some of the families and staff.

The clinic offers medical services to both clients and children residing in Mukuru slums at an affordable cost. A waiver program is available to help those who are in dire need of medical attention. Additionally, the clinic's

social office is responsible for ensuring that children who have previously received treatment at other hospitals through the MPC attend their routine check-ups. This office also follows up on all cases to ensure that the patients recover fully. Unfortunately, the catch-22 position of some parents of sick children cannot cooperate as they need to prioritize casual work over their child's recovery, thus delaying the healing process.

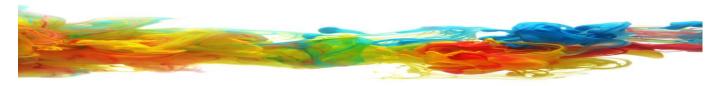




Home visits to needy families and fire victims in the community



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Needy Students from Sancta Maria Kayaaba received new uniforms

Nutrition and Food Parcels to needy Families

Teenage mother

As part of the Chantal Goetz Foundation program, 50 girls received food packages for June so that they could concentrate on their courses of studies instead of worrying about hunger.

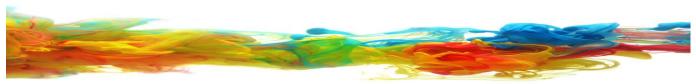


Pablo Castillo (Spain) presents to students at Skills

The parents were offered a workshop on positive and effective parenting skills. The vocational training students were offered "employing assertive communication techniques" by Pablo Castillo, a volunteer from Spain. Pablo is currently completing his Masters in English Literature from the University of Edinburgh.

The social workers conducted a follow-up on the parents who started their own businesses to evaluate their progress. Sadly for Vanessa Wanjiru, initially her salon was doing well until thieves stole all her equipment.





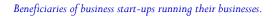
Anne Kanini runs a salon and is doing well. She also sells clothes and shoes. Anne has shown great initiative by using technology to sell her items on-line.



Hyline Sarange sells crocs and plastics.



Flossy Kinyua sells fruits





Emily with her mother and baby



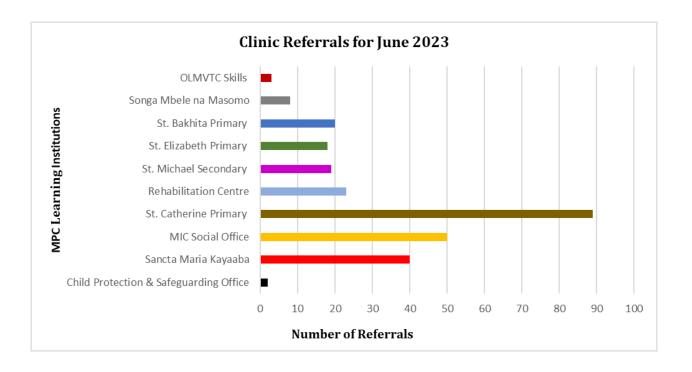
Nancy Wanjiru sells snacks

A former, Special art class student, Emily Ongachi who is 34 with 8 children, started a business and sells omena (small fish - sardines) is doing well. Emily is now able to pay her rent, buy food and pay for her daughter Teresia's school fees.

In June, more than 2,850 individuals received various forms of assistance. Notably, nutritional aid was provided to sick patients and undernourished infants, while support was extended to impoverished students and their families. Additionally, medical advocacy and pastoral visits were conducted in multiple villages. By visiting homes, social workers gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the numerous children attending MPC schools daily. Despite the successful networking of the MPC, the demand for resources remains much greater than what is currently available, but MPC endeavours' to be present where it can within the community.



There was a reduction of 373 patients treated at the Clinic in June compared to last month. In June 1,827 patients were treated with 272 coming from one of the MPC institutions. The most prevalent diseases in June were respiratory-related and gastrointestinal. The major cause is due to a lack of access to clean water and sanitation hygiene. None of the shanties in the villages have the infrastructure to dispose of household wastes.



The Clinic is registered as a 'Faith Based Medical Institution' that is licensed to operate as a 'Dispensary' offering services such as general consultations, vaccinations, minor surgeries, maternal and child health care, deworming programs and nutritional support.

Summary Statistics for June								
Categories	0-5 Yrs	6-12 Yrs	13-17 Yrs	18-35 Yrs	36-49 Yrs	50-64 Yrs	Above 64 Yrs	Total
Registrations	558	242	130	549	220	111	17	1,827
Diseases Treated	422	222	125	522	206	107	17	1,621
Clinics	235	0	2	74	3	0	0	314
Laboratory Tests	74	97	57	315	98	69	3	713



During the month, the Clinic welcomed four medical students, one from Spain and three from Ireland. Their names were Iciar Aldonza, Emily Gaine, Abigail O'Neill, and Ciara Murray. These students assisted with the deworming program and visited various schools under staff supervision. They began their visits with St. Catherine's, then moved on to St. Elizabeth, Sancta Maria Kayaaba, St. Bakhita, and finally St. Michael's. While interacting with the children, the students took notes for any necessary follow-up actions. In some cases, malnourished or physically disabled children were identified for the staff to address later.

The medical students generously donated a variety of items to the clinic to assist in patient treatments, which are greatly appreciated.



Emily, Abby, Iciar and Ciara Murray, distributing the deworming tablets to pupils.



Abby analyses the specimen





Mother and child clinic making sure that the babies are immunized.



**Rehabilitation Centre** 

The staff at the Centre are actively involved in mentoring and motivating the boys in all aspects of life including education, sports, culture, and well-being. In the month of June, the boys performed exceptionally well in their academic and extracurricular activities. The teachers ensured that all the requirements for the mid-term exams for the Class 8 boys were met, in order to reduce any potential anxiety for the boys.

The Centre's animal projects are thriving with 35 chickens and 5 rabbits. The vegetable plots, which were planted in April, will be harvested later this month. In July, new vegetable seedlings will be planted to ensure a continuous supply of certain vegetables for the Centre.



Chicken Coop

Rabbits in the hutch

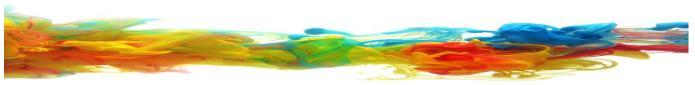
Vegetables Beds

The boys attended the high school rugby competition that took place at St. Mary's School, thanks to Paula Cullen and friends for sponsoring the excursion. The excursion gave the boys the opportunity to see other schools play the game as well as make new friends. The KRC rugby development officer, Ronnald Okoth was present with some of the boys who were supporting Blackrock College at the recent tournament.





Coach Adelaide with the Rehab Rugby Team at St. Mary's High School.



The boys put in extra effort during their participation in the annual Mater Misericordiae Hospital Heart Run, which aims to raise funds for heart procedures for underprivileged children. This event helps those whose parents cannot afford to pay for such procedures.



The Rehab Boys and Sr Mary at the Ulinzi Complex Sports Centre

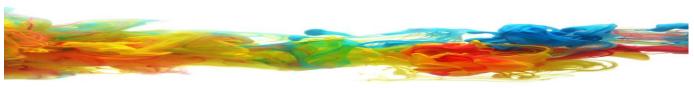


The boys performed at the Day Of the African Child.

One important day to commemorate each year is the Day of the African Child. Recently, the Nairobi County Children's Office hosted the celebration at Mathare Special School. All the schools in the area were invited and St Bakhita Primary School children also attended. During the event, the Rehab boys entertained the guests when they recited a poem, "I am an African Child".

The Government officials conveyed a message on the importance of being a responsible person.

Secure Islamic France sponsored two teachers from the Centre to receive training on the new CBC (competency-based curriculum) after the Ministry of Education approved the content. The teachers attended the training held at Mukuru Slum Development Projects (MSDP).



During the month, a former resident named James Kamau assisted as he was on a break from university. His positive role modelling encouraged the boys to focus on their educational goals in order to improve and have more options when they leave the centre.



One of the boys' favorite meals is pizza, and the neighboring restaurant often receives large orders when visitors come to the Center. Recently, our friends from British Airways returned and taught the boys how to make pizzas. Now, with their newfound knowledge, there will be no shortage of volunteers to cook them.



Africa and her friends show the boys how to make pizza.

The Centre is grateful for the many people who help out with donations of clothing, provisions, bread, meat, hygiene materials, firewood, plants, and cheer. Thank you again to Team Pankaj, Sahani, Bakers Corner, Paula Cullen and Friends, Pembe, Madam Fidelia, Maxxis Ltd and the Pfizer Group for their generosity.



Practical donations

Fresh Provisions





Birthday cake for Alex



The MPC sponsorship program continued to assist the vulnerable to access learning opportunities in Mukuru slums. Through the generosity of donors over 490 children/youths had a place in a learning institution with a gender ratio 52:48, females to males. The vast majority were in secondary schools at 58% and 29% in primary schools with 12% in special education centres.

The Sponsorship Office is collaborating with schools to tackle the issue of students who find it difficult to

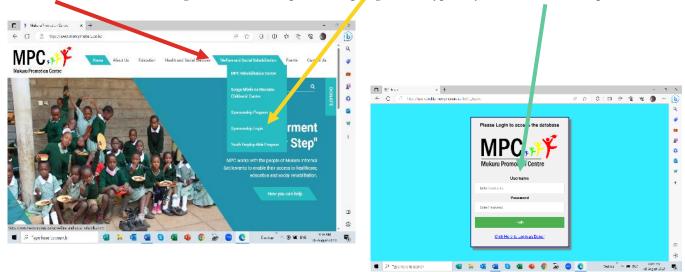


balance their responsibilities at home with their academic performance. In order to support these students in gaining admission to university or vocational courses, a meeting was organized for parents and guardians to discuss strategies for improvement. During the meeting, the significance of parental involvement in their child's education and the impact of poor academic performance were highlighted, along with the expectations and responsibilities of the sponsorship program. By adopting a proactive approach, the aim is to empower students to achieve success in spite of the obstacles they may face at home.

Parents / Guardians meeting.

Around 200 parents and guardians attended the meeting, whose children are part of the program. The feedback received was both positive and constructive. They expressed gratitude towards the sponsorship program and showed willingness to cooperate with the school and the sponsorship office. Additionally, they shared some of the challenges they face at home, including poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism, and lack of parental guidance. However, they have recommitted to encouraging their children to attend school daily, complete homework, and fully participate in school activities.

Just a reminder to sponsors that the sponsorship database has been updated with students' letters and reports. To log on, go to the MPC website [www.mercymukuru.co.ke] and follow the prompts under the 'Welfare and Social Rehabilitation' heading then click on 'Sponsorship login' and type in your username and password.





The Centre has a total enrolment of 97 with 5 new admissions during May. Sadly, Beatrice Mbithe, died from health complications. Beatrice had been attending Songa for several years. The new enrolments are aged between 3 - 12 years with cerebral palsy, autism, delayed developmental milestone due to rickets and learning difficulties.

Throughout the month, the learning activities persisted and some Units were provided with additional furniture and a television to facilitate the classes. The children from various Units underwent occupational and physiotherapy sessions to guarantee that they are making progress according to their respective milestones. A total of 33% of the children had more than 10 therapy sessions in the month. Moreover, 60% of the 48 children who attended speech therapy had 5 or more sessions during the month.







Donated Television by Whistle

Children using the Hearing Tablets



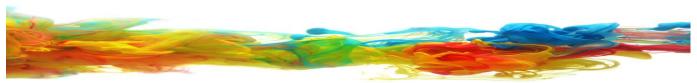
During her stay in Perth, Sr Mary consulted with Dr O'Shea on how to identify children with structural hearing disabilities. Dr O'Shea recommended using specific software to distinguish actual hearing disabilities from minor issues affecting children's hearing. The

Friends of Mukuru WA purchased tablets and installed software to identify children with hearing disabilities. Thanks to the Kenyan Child Foundation, children identified with hearing disabilities are referred to specialists at the Lions Hearing Institute for thorough examination and fitting of hearing aids.



The big improver for June is Roscah Kavengi who is aged 13. Roscah has cerebral palsy and struggles with her balance and coordination. She finds it difficult to crawl and walk. After continuous therapy exercises her muscles are much stronger enabling her to crawl, speak a few words, kneel without support and partially stand.





Before admitting identified children, the Centre carried out 8 home visits to assess their living conditions and followed up on absenteeism issues. The donations received by the Centre from kind-hearted people are highly

appreciated and invaluable. A needy family was referred for food assistance and 13 children were provided with clothes. Additionally, the Rupert School issued school uniforms to 50 children.



Training Participants



Staff Safeguarding Training

In June, Cheshire Disability Services Kenya arranged multiple training sessions for staff and parents. The first session was a Child Protection and Safeguarding training day for those sponsored by Cheshire. Additionally, Cheshire sponsored a one-week training program for a social worker in Nakuru. The Servants of the Sick's representative, Vicki Okumu, provided counseling training that emphasized work performance to improve the quality of care for vulnerable children.

During the month, a hygiene mentorship session was conducted for the children in Unit 3 class. Additionally, 13 sessions were organized to assist children with learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities express themselves more effectively. These sessions were conducted by a volunteer counselor who has provided valuable assistance to both children and parents.



Mentorship Session



Sr Rugiri donated crates of bread from the bakery

In June, the Centre welcomed 25 visitors who represented various organizations and generously donated useful items such as food provisions, hygiene materials, stationery, and clothes. Some of the visitors were able to take some to interact with the children. Sr. Teresia Rugiri, from the Sisters of Mercy bakery in Kiambu, kindly provided fresh bread.

## Education Primary Schools



There were fewer activities taking place as the schools had a mid-term break however, the co-curricular activities for children are always more fun for most pupils than academic lessons. Giving children a break from routine classwork encourages them to think more creatively while covering the syllabus. The most exciting activity was the zonal music festival where all MPC schools qualified for the regional level.

St Bakhita Music Festival

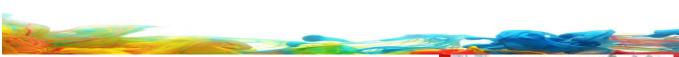
The Curriculum Support unit was established to decentralize the functions of the Commission and to provide quality teaching techniques for teachers. During the month, Curriculum Support Officer (CSO) visited all the schools and advised teachers on the latest curriculum changes, methodology and pedagogy.

Grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 assessment tools had already been posted on the school Competency-Based Assessments (CBA) portal. Grade 3 pupils will be assessed on integrated learning first, followed by Maths and English tests later in the year, and have their scores submitted to Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). The assessment tools will be provided in two formats, PDF and digital. Schools will score and upload the assessment outcomes of all learners on the CBA portal. The Grade 7 students will be assessed on practicals, projects, and performance tasks. The parents are expected to provide the materials for the assessments which makes life extremely difficult for them.

Noticeably, the poverty levels in Mukuru slum have intensified since the pandemic and Ukraine / Russian war. Thankfully, the National and the County Governments of Nairobi launched a school meals program to begin in August in a drive to '*eliminate the shame of hunger in the country*'. The Government has requested that parents make a contribution of 5Khs ( $\in$  3cent) daily for lunch and the Government will top up the rest. This move has been criticized by so many headteachers including those from the MPC schools, and termed it as a failing project as the money allocated for the feeding program cannot feed all children in public primary schools for more than 4 months. The schools are waiting for the next move from the Government on this matter.

President Ruto joins the children for lunch





The *Mater Heart Run* was started in 2002 by Sr Magdalen Rafferty, CEO of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital to raise funds for poor children whose families could not afford heart surgery. The tradition started in Nairobi County and now it is held simultaneously in 10 counties raising millions of Kenya Shillings. The current CEO, Sr Maria Ngui oversaw the 2023 run as the hospital celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. After 21 years over 4,000 procedures have been performed by international and local heart specialists. Thousands of children can now engage with the world as children should with lots of joy and energy! The MPC institutions and other schools participated in this year's event held on June 3.



MPC Pupils at the Heart Run



For the past several years, the Likoni Road dumpsite has become a serious problem due to the unpleasant odor emanating from the site. There has been a significant increase in cases of Pulmonary Tract Infections, and children have been complaining of stomach issues. Despite reporting the issue to relevant authorities such as the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), no action has been taken. In conjunction with neighboring communities, MPC has escalated the matter to higher authorities in the hopes of getting the site shut down. As

of now, the matter is still with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and we remain hopeful that appropriate action will be taken.

The Day of the African Child is a special occasion that honors African children and seeks to tackle the many difficulties they encounter. It also highlights the ongoing need to enhance education for children in Africa. Governments, NGOs, educators, and international organizations come together on this day to discuss the challenges faced by African children. This year's theme was the *Rights of Children in digital environments*, which raised awareness about online safety for children.



St Bakhita pupils celebrate the Day of the African Child



St Michael's enrolments have reached 509 which equates to 85% capacity with a gender parity. The classes continued during the month along with meetings and support programs.

The team from the Nation Media Group (newspaper) visited St Michael's to create awareness of Kiswahili and English essay writings and the exams published in their two newspapers. The Uhamasisho group, led by Dan Bobea, who is also an author of Kiswahili books like "Makasia ya Kiswahili" and many others. The launch greatly benefited our students, especially in essay writing as well as "Insha". Students were encouraged to participate in monthly competition essays as featured in both newspapers, 'Daily' and 'Taifa Leo'. Active students were rewarded with pens, T-Shirts and notebooks. The language teachers were also given T-Shirts, notebooks and umbrellas.







The Uhamasisho Group Visit



St Michael's held an afternoon music extravaganza in preparation for the County inter-school competition for later in the month. With the guidance of Madam Margaret Mutwiwa, students participated in the following categories: traditional folk song, taarab, spoken word and own compositions. Students were highly motivated as they showcased their talents in these fields. Due to financial constraints, the school was not able to participate at the county level despite the preparation by the team.

Students showcase their talents



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The second Mentorship session for term 2 was held and facilitated by World Youth Alliance (WAY) and Pablo Castillo. The theme for the day was 'Human Dignity and Freedom for Excellence'. The component involved self-worth, making excellent choices, choosing one's own path and choosing a career that is meaningful to you and your community. Mr Pablo focused on careers by looking closer at what influences career choices, challenges and facing the challenges in any chosen career.



Mr Pablo addresses the students



St. Michael's mentorship session.

What would a school be without sport. The school football teams participated at the Makadara sub-county games which were held at Highway Secondary School. Despite the losses, the student's enthusiasm was not dampened. They just appreciated being able to attend and represent their school.



St Michael's Secondary Football and Netball Teams



At the Parents Annual General Meeting, a new PTA Executive Committee was elected. Mr Atacha Augustine (Chairperson) represents 4N, Mrs Mumbi Waititu (Vice Chairperson) represents 3E, Mrs Geraldine Nziza represents 3N. The PTA Secretary is Miss Sarah Ondara, teacher. The other members of staff are: Mr Eric Waweru (principal), Mrs Loice Chege (deputy principal), Mr Peter Machoka (teacher) and Miss Rose Nyangweso (teacher).

The representatives have volunteered for one year to assist St Michael's School Executive to ensure that issues raised are discussed at the different year groups. One of the major concerns for parents and teachers is about the increase of drugs around the school premises and at home. Parents were assured that the necessary precautions and disciplinary measures are in place and that the school is working collaboratively with the local authorities to eliminate the issue. We are grateful to the parents for assisting the school.



Parent AGM

St Michael's received donations from Strathmore University for the secondary girls to enable them not to miss out on any lessons. The girls received sanitary pads, uniforms and body oil.





St Michael's needy students with their donations.



The enrolments for OLMVTC are going well with a few more in June. Apart from Computer Studies (81) which is a short course, the most enrolled course is Hairdressing with 52 students, followed by Plumbing with 31 and then Catering with 26 students. These courses enable students to obtain employment almost immediately after completion. There were 89 students referred from the MPC primary schools, St Michael's secondary and the social offices to the Vocational Centre as they did not obtain a high enough KCSE mark to join the university. Over 50 students received sponsorship from the Fidel Goetz Foundation and we wish them well as they begin a new path on their educational journey.

In June, the Centre organized a graduation ceremony for the Class of 2021-2022, which saw 125 students graduate. The event was graced by esteemed guests such as Madam Irene Muraguir from the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), Franck Lawrence representing the MPC Board, and Sr. Mary Kanyi from the Sisters of Mercy. The ceremony was a success, and we appreciate the hard work put in by the staff who organized the memorable event.



Graduates of Class of 2021 - 2022

In June, the upcoming group of students will have continuous assessment tests. These assessments are designed to identify areas that require improvement for students. Addressing any specific issues at an earlier stage of the learning process can help students to succeed.

To promote teamwork and collaboration for the betterment of students, a team-building day was organized at Karura Forest for the staff. A group of 20 staff members with some of their own children participated in various exercises aimed at enhancing communication, planning, and time management skills.







Team Building at Karura Forest



Staff at Karura Forest with their children and visitors

The Centre had a Thanksgiving Mass where Fr. Joseph reminded the students to be thankful to God for all good that is in our lives. We were blessed and we were nourished by the word of God.



Pablo teaches the class

Pablo, who volunteered as an English teacher at the Centre for a month, received a farewell from his students before returning to his homeland, Spain. The students expressed their gratitude towards him and acknowledged their progress in writing and communication skills.



Cutting the Cake

With the new cohort, it is important to assist them in every possible way. The election of student representatives is one such way. The student leaders will help others to develop academic independence, take care of the Centre's property and equipment, support each other and be positive. The program requires students to volunteer, candidates to campaign on a platform and for all enrolled students to vote for their preferred candidate.



Candidates address the students





Casting Votes

Counting the Votes



# Announcements

Many activities continue throughout the month that are not reported but are very necessary to maintain the outreach services of MPC.

- Meeting with the Local Chiefs and Starehe Ward and Deputy County Commissioner regarding the pollution coming from the dumpsite. The Commissioner pledged to end the trucks dumping garbage at the site.
- British Airways crew members visited the centre and donated many items for the Skills students and boys at the Rehabilitation Centre.





## **Mukuru Promotion Centre**

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